

SCIENTIFIC CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS' "NUTRICLEAN FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM"

Introduction

The NutriClean Food Safety Management Program was launched by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) in 1984. NutriClean is the agricultural division of SCS. The program is based on the "No Detected Residues"(NDR) certification for fresh produce. The NutriClean-Certified NDR standard means that produce contains no pesticide residues above a laboratory detection limit of 0.05 parts per million. The program was launched not only to test pesticide residues in fresh produce, but also to recognize growers whose crops meet these standards. NutriClean standards are up to 1,000 times more stringent than those of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The program has several components, one of which is Grower Certification. Produce from fields that are NutriClean-certified carries a certification label on pallets and containers and may be accompanied by a shelf label in retail stores. In addition to grower certification, SCS performs testing services for growers, retailers, and importers. Foods grown organically that have no detected residues qualify for NutriClean's Organic Certification.

NutriClean is based on three key principles: 1) the certification is granted by an independent, neutral, third-party with no vested interest in the product being certified; 2) all claims must be scientifically verifiable; and 3) the certification process is complete with appropriate "checks and balances" to ensure accuracy in the final result.

The NutriClean program has certified over 400 growers domestically and internationally. It works with 15 major grocery store chains with more than 3,000 individual stores, and provides services to more than 150 importers.

Recent Developments

NutriClean recently introduced a program to provide a variety of food safety management services based on the principal known as HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point). HACCP procedures cover proper food handling, preparation, and storage techniques, and are designed to control physical, chemical, and microbiological hazards. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Agriculture have established HACCP requirements for seafood, meat, and poultry. Produce standards are voluntary at this time. SCS assists grocery retailers, food processors, suppliers, and growers in meeting these requirements. SCS offers food safety and sanitation programs, employee education, and certification of well-planned and properly implemented HACCP-based food safety management programs.

Program Summary

SCS's NutriClean program has several components. Grower Certification involves testing produce and certifying that it meets "clean" food standards; in other words, that the produce has "No Detected Residues" (NDR). NutriClean certification requires that growers fully disclose the pesticides that they use. SCS staff conduct on-site inspections and take field samples from the produce, which are extensively analyzed by independent laboratories. SCS frequently splits samples among different testing laboratories as a quality control measure. Tests are conducted for each pesticide used by the grower, regardless of whether it is natural or synthetically derived. When a field is certified as having NDR, its produce is licensed to carry a NutriClean label. In addition, certified products are published in NutriClean's weekly *Certified Product Status Bulletin*, which is available on a subscription basis to wholesale distributors, retailers, and food providers. Fees for grower certification vary greatly and depend on the number of fields and number of pesticides, among other variables.

Additional services for growers are intended to encourage the responsible reduction in pesticide use and can assist growers in meeting NutriClean NDR standards. These services include: employing microbiological assays to assist growers in developing microbiological quality assurance programs, nutritional analyses to help growers maximize the nutritional value of crops, analyzing the rate that pesticides decay on crops to help farmers fine-tune their pesticide applications, documenting that crops comply with government regulations, and conducting soil and water analyses to provide information about potential contamination.

NutriClean offers a variety of services to retailers. One of these services is testing non-NutriClean-Certified produce items for pesticide levels and pathogens to verify compliance with FDA regulations. This testing service may be part of retailers' own quality assurance program. This program is known as the "DOCK" program because NutriClean collects samples at the loading docks of retail distribution centers. Collection is done either weekly or bi-weekly. The number of samples collected is based on the volume of produce that the retailer purchases. NutriClean attempts to sample five percent of the incoming product. NutriClean also conducts laboratory analyses of food microbiology, chemistry, additives, alteration, and nutrition, and can conduct chain-of-custody sampling and verification. In general, these services help retailers improve food quality and safety. Fees for DOCK testing vary depending on the quantity of produce sampled.

NutriClean also tests a variety of food items for importers. In addition to produce, NutriClean tests seafood, meat and poultry, processed foods, and spices for pesticide residues, harmful bacteria and parasites. The main purpose of this service is to aid importers in complying with FDA pesticide residue limits. Fees for importers are competitive with those of other organizations doing similar work.

Program Methodology

The “No Detected Residues”(NDR) certification is the same for all types of fresh produce. To be certified, produce must have no detectable pesticide residue above 0.05 parts per million. The level of 0.05 ppm is the standard limit of quantification that can be met by most labs. In developing the program, information was gathered from independent studies, participating producers, and current literature. The program has been peer reviewed. Operating costs are covered by the fees collected for services.

Other Information

Although NutriClean certifies growers both within and outside of the US, it has not been involved in any trade conflicts.

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Product Categories

Produce

Seafood

Meat

Poultry

Spices